

and dignity. And may Your spirit, O God, be in all of our hearts and minds and encourage us to do the works of peace and justice, now and always.

May all that we do be done for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. FORBES) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. FORBES led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain up to 15 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

MILITARY COMMISSARIES

(Mr. FORBES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. FORBES. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in opposition to media reports that have suggested the closure of military commissaries in the United States and that that may be under consideration by the Department of Defense.

Our national defense, and the men and women who volunteer to serve, are not the cause of our current financial fiscal crisis. Proposals that ask them to carry the weight of solving it are unacceptable.

Commissaries are a vital recruitment and retention tool essential to maintaining the all-volunteer force. President Obama recognized this fact earlier this year when he visited Camp Pendleton during a furlough day and said commissary closures are "not how a great Nation should be treating its military and military families."

Each year, commissaries provide an average 31 percent savings for military families. Additionally, by allowing the Defense Commissary Agency, based out of Fort Lee, Virginia, to purchase products at higher volumes, the 178 commissaries in the United States bring down costs across all our commissaries.

I urge my colleagues to oppose any effort to close our commissaries, a system that is highly valued by our servicemembers and part of the commitment we make to take care of them during and after their time volunteering in service to our Nation.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

(Mr. COSTA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, as a representative of the San Joaquin Valley of California, I know our economic recovery has been uneven at best. Unemployment remains unacceptably high in areas like my district.

Those on unemployment are not socking taxpayer dollars away for a rainy day. Today already is their rainy day. Their benefits go back into our economy immediately for basic needs, like food and rent, while they look for work.

After 27 years at an insurance company, Jacqueline of Atwater, California, was let go last May. Since then the 53-year-old has struggled to find work.

Another constituent of mine, Luis in Fresno, lost his unemployment insurance at the end of December. This father wrote:

If I don't find a job in the next couple of weeks, then I will not be able to pay my rent or pay for food for my family.

With all the talk about restoring certainty to our economy, we cannot forget that American families drive this economy.

Now is not the time to take money out of their pockets as they are also struggling to recover. Let's restore unemployment with a bipartisan effort.

TODAY'S ECONOMY

(Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, while home for Christmas, I reflected on the economic challenges America faces and the parallels today's economy has with the one Ronald Reagan inherited from Jimmy Carter in 1981. Both were characterized by high unemployment and low labor-force participation.

I will paraphrase some of what President Reagan said in first Inaugural address:

Idle industries have cast workers into unemployment, causing human misery and personal indignity. Those who do work are denied a fair return for their labor by a tax system which penalizes successful achievement and keeps us from maintaining full productivity.

For decades, we have piled deficit upon deficit, mortgaging our future and our children's future for the temporary convenience of present.

By the end of Ronald Reagan's Presidency, America's unemployment rate was 5.4 percent and our economy was the envy of the world. It is time we learn from history. As President Reagan said, Government is the problem. Individuals, free from the heavy hand of Big Government to pursue their dreams, they create prosperity. It is time we revisit the simple, sacred truth.

EXTEND UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

(Ms. CHU asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. CHU. Mr. Speaker, this past Monday was the first time in months that 1.3 million out-of-work Americans went to their mailboxes and did not find an unemployment check.

People like Kaitlyn Smith from my State of California, a Marine Corps vet and mother of two young children, she said that she had been searching for work for months but has not had success. California is starting to recover, but it still has 400,000 fewer jobs than it did before the downturn. It is especially hard to find jobs in the high desert where she lives; but the family can't move because her husband, a veteran of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, must remain near the combat center until he is discharged from the Marines in July.

The loss of her benefits will cut even more deeply into the couple's income. Kaitlyn says the family is already skimping on basics, including heat. She says:

I have to keep the house at 55 degrees, even though I have two little girls, ages 2½ and 1½.

For Kaitlyn and others like her, we must extend unemployment benefits, and we must extend them now.

VISIT TO CHARLIE NORWOOD VAMC

(Mr. BROUN of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BROUN of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, this week I went to Augusta, Georgia, to participate in an oversight hearing with Chairman JEFF MILLER of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. This visit was the result of multiple deaths and delays in care reported in the Augusta veterans hospital. We must find out what exactly went wrong.

As both a U.S. Marine and a current medical doctor in the Navy Reserves, I take reports of poor care for our veterans very seriously. I questioned hospital staff on how, when, and why these lapses in care occurred, and who is ultimately responsible.

While it appears that under new leadership the hospital is heading in a positive direction, this is just the beginning of a full investigation. We have made promises to our veterans. It is vital that we fulfill these promises.

I have pledged to work to hold those responsible and the VA accountable. I am fully committed to making sure that our veterans receive world-class health care in Augusta, as well as VA hospitals all across the country.